



US 20160096591A1

(19) **United States**

(12) **Patent Application Publication**
Hoge, JR.

(10) **Pub. No.: US 2016/0096591 A1**

(43) **Pub. Date: Apr. 7, 2016**

(54) **DROP STITCH INFLATABLE KAYAK**

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(21) Appl. No.: **14/505,749**

(22) Filed: **Oct. 3, 2014**

Publication Classification

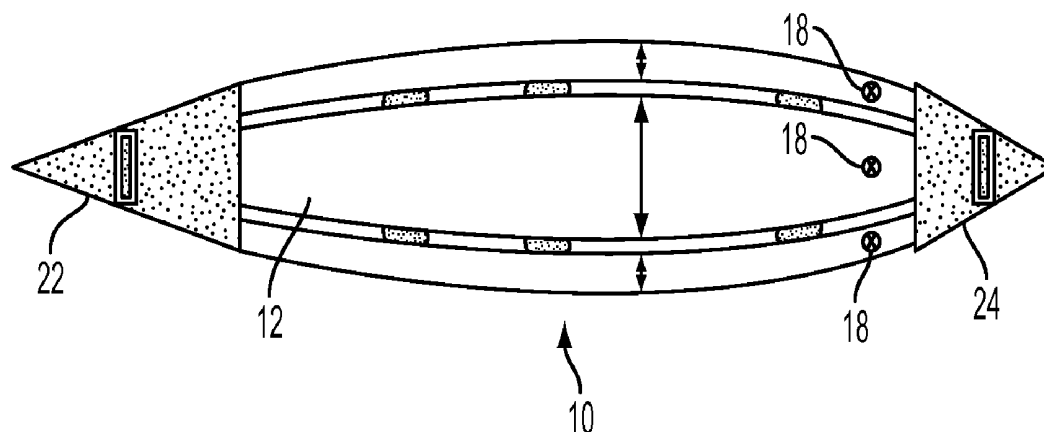
(51) **Int. Cl.**
B63B 7/08 (2006.01)
B63B 35/71 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**

CPC . **B63B 7/08** (2013.01); **B63B 35/71** (2013.01);
B63B 7/082 (2013.01)

(57) **ABSTRACT**

An inflatable kayak includes an inflatable floor made of high pressure drop stitch material; and inflatable sides made of high-pressure drop stitch material formed at port and starboard sides of the inflatable floor, respectively. The drop stitch inflatable sides can be glued or welded directly to the port and starboard sides of the inflatable floor, and the inflatable sides are configured to be inclined outboard from the inflatable floor. Alternatively, the inflatable sides may be glued or welded to a non-inflated fabric floor and the inflatable floor made of high pressure drop stitch material may be positioned and attached to a top of the non-inflated fabric floor with the inflatable sides pressing against the inflatable floor.



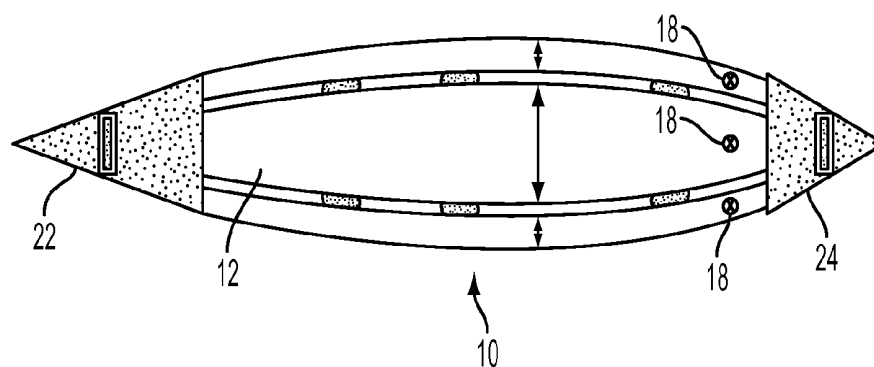


FIG. 1

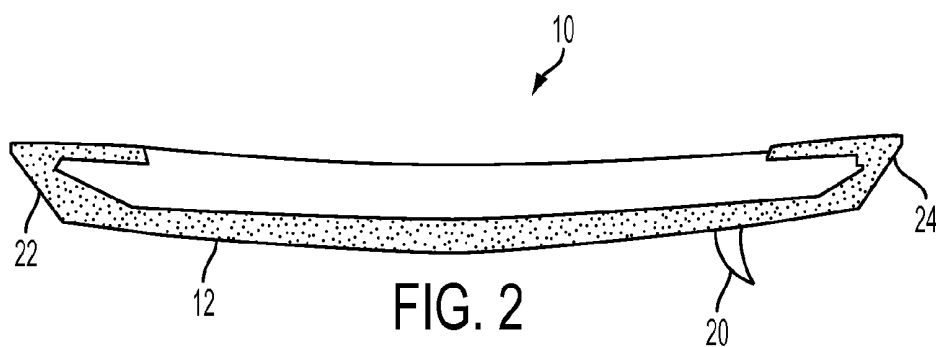


FIG. 2

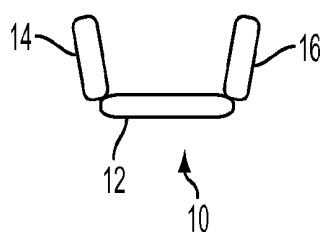


FIG. 3

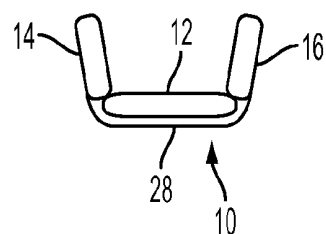


FIG. 4

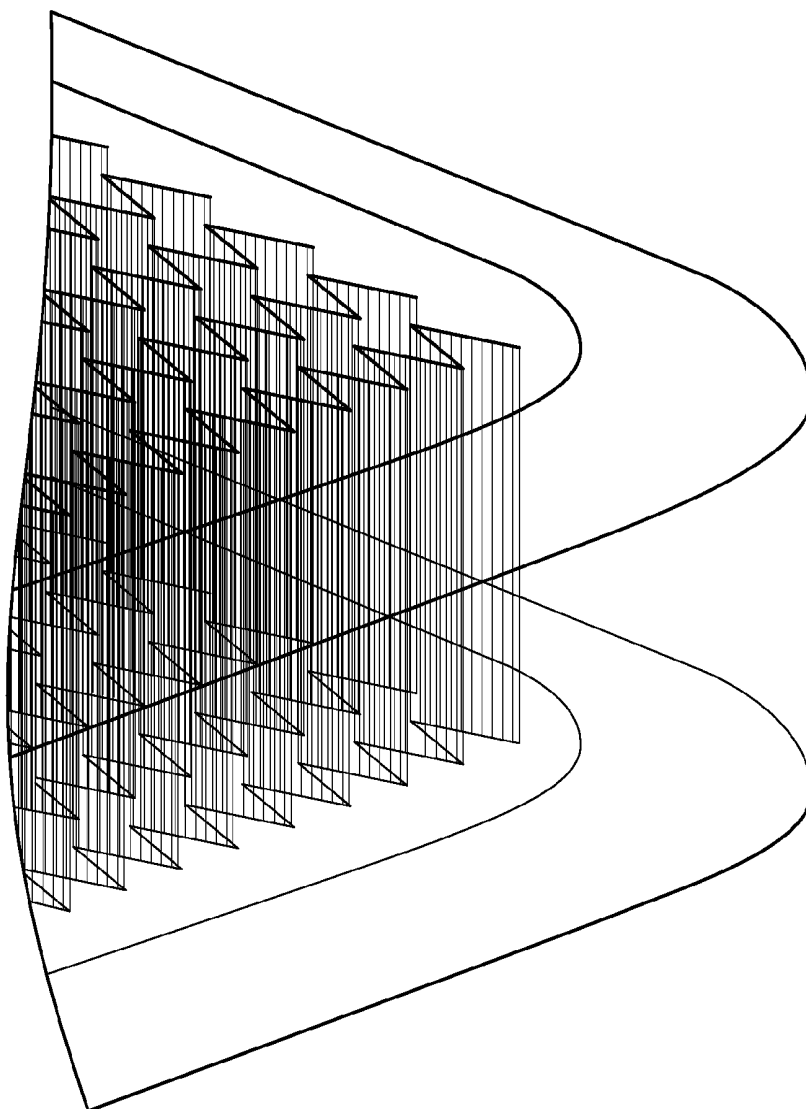


FIG. 5

DROP STITCH INFLATABLE KAYAK

BACKGROUND

[0001] 1. Field

[0002] Embodiments relate to watercraft, and more particularly, to an inflatable kayak having drop stitch construction throughout the inflatable kayak and rigid bow and stern molds.

[0003] 2. Description of the Related Art

[0004] A kayak is a small watercraft having a narrow beam which typically is propelled by a user's manipulation of a double-bladed paddle. Traditional kayaks were first developed for hunting in inland lakes, rivers and coastal waters, and originally consisted of animal skins stretched over a wood or whalebone frame.

[0005] Modern kayaks have long been a popular form of watercraft due their shallow draught, low free board and easy maneuverability. More recently, the popularity of kayaking has increased due to the portability of a kayak, the ability for a user to paddle longer distances than in other self-propelled watercraft such as rowboats and canoes, and the exercise benefits of kayaking that simultaneously allows a user to enjoy their surroundings.

[0006] As kayaks entered the modern era, they were constructed of wood or fabric stretched over a wooden frame. More recently, fiberglass kayaks or kayaks constructed of rotomolded polyethylene resins are the dominate types of kayak.

[0007] Inflatable coated fabric kayaks are also conventionally used. Inflatable coated fabric kayaks have the advantage in that they are easier to store and transport. An inflatable coated fabric kayak typically includes inflatable tubes joined to form the kayak. In particular single round inflatable tubes form both the port and starboard sides of the conventional inflatable coated fabric kayaks, which reduces the speed and maneuverability of the inflatable coated fabric kayaks since with the shape of a round inflatable tube prevents the hull of the inflatable coated fabric kayaks from having a V-shaped hull, and also decreases the speed of the inflatable coated fabric kayaks.

[0008] Accordingly, an inflatable kayak having the advantages of a rigid kayak is needed, while still retaining the advantages of economy and portability of an inflatable kayak.

SUMMARY

[0009] Therefore, it is one aspect of the present invention to provide an inflatable kayak having flat sides constructed of drop stitch material to create an inflatable kayak having a V-shaped sides that flare out from the floor. This improves speed and ease of paddling.

[0010] Additional aspects will be set forth in part in the description which follows and, in part, will be apparent from the description, or may be learned by practice of the invention.

[0011] According to an aspect, an inflatable kayak includes an inflatable floor made of high pressure drop stitch material; and inflatable sides made of high-pressure drop stitch material formed at port and starboard sides of the inflatable floor, respectively.

[0012] The inflatable sides may be glued or welded directly to the port and starboard sides of the inflatable floor, and the inflatable sides are configured to be inclined outboard from the inflatable floor. Alternatively, the inflatable sides may be

glued or welded to a non-inflated fabric floor and the inflatable floor made of high pressure drop stitch material may be positioned and attached to a top of the non-inflated fabric floor with the inflatable sides pressing against the inflatable floor made of high pressure drop stitch material.

[0013] The inflatable kayak may further include a rigid bow mold attached to the inflatable floor and inflatable sides.

[0014] The inflatable kayak may further include a rigid stern mold attached to the inflatable floor and inflatable sides.

[0015] In the inflatable kayak, the high pressure drop stitch material of the inflatable floor and inflatable sides may include a coated polyester fabric of approximately 1000 denier with 1000 denier drop stitch threads.

[0016] In the inflatable kayak, the inflatable floor and inflatable sides may be configured to be inflated to between 3-25 psi.

[0017] The inflatable kayak may have a length of between 9-21 feet.

[0018] The inflatable kayak may have a beam of between 22-32 inches.

[0019] In the inflatable kayak, a thickness of the drop stitch material used for the inflatable floor and the inflatable sides may be between 3-8 inches.

[0020] The inflatable may have an asymmetrical shape in a fore and aft direction, the inflatable kayak being slightly wider aft of an amidships portion and slightly narrower forward of the amidships portion.

[0021] The inflatable kayak may include one or more skegs formed on an after portion of a bottom of the inflatable floor, to improve tracking while paddling.

[0022] In the inflatable kayak, the rigid bow mold and the rigid stern mold may be made of rigid engineering or composite plastic.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0023] These and/or other aspects and advantages of the invention will become apparent and more readily appreciated from the following description of the embodiments, taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings in which:

[0024] FIG. 1 is top view of an inflatable kayak in accordance with an embodiment;

[0025] FIG. 2 is a side view of the inflatable kayak in accordance with the embodiment;

[0026] FIG. 3 is a cross-sectional view taken along lines 3-3' of FIG. 2 of the inflatable kayak in accordance with an embodiment;

[0027] FIG. 4 is a cross-sectional view taken along lines 3-3' of FIG. 2 of the rigid bow of the inflatable kayak in accordance with an embodiment including a non-inflatable floor; and

[0028] FIG. 5 is a conceptual view of the drop stitch material of the interior of the inflatable kayak in accordance with an embodiment.

DESCRIPTION OF EMBODIMENTS

[0029] Reference will now be made in detail to the embodiments of the present invention, examples of which are illustrated in the accompanying drawings, wherein like reference numerals refer to like elements throughout. The embodiments are described below to explain the present invention by referring to the annexed drawings.

[0030] As shown in FIGS. 1 and 2, the inflatable kayak 10 includes an inflatable floor 12 made of high-pressure drop

stitch material. The inflatable floor **12** may be made of 1000 denier polyester fabric but may be made of other stronger or weaker fabric materials. An example of the drop stitch material is shown in FIG. **5** where thousands of drop stitches are provided to maintain an equal distance between the top and bottom surfaces of the inflatable floor **12**. The drop stitch threads may be in a linear, zigzag or random pattern. The drop stitch thread may be configured in linear, or various other patterns including “X” and “V” patterns. The use of drop stitch material in the floor **12** allows the floor **12** to be inflated to a pressure of 15 psi.

[0031] Glued or welded directly to the inflatable floor **12** are inflatable sides **14**, **16** which are also made of high-pressure drop stitch material formed at port and starboard sides of the inflatable floor **12**, respectively. The inflatable sides **14**, **16** may also be made of 1000 denier polyester fabric but may be made of other stronger or weaker fabric materials. The drop stitch threads may be in a linear, zigzag or random patterns including “X” and “V” patterns. The use of drop stitch material in the inflatable sides **14**, **16** allows the inflatable sides **14**, **16** to be inflated to a pressure of 10 psi, 15 psi or greater psi.

[0032] Alternatively, as shown in FIG. **4**, the inflatable sides **14**, **16** may be glued or welded to a non-inflated fabric floor **28** and the inflatable floor **12** made of high pressure drop stitch material may be positioned and attached to a top of the non-inflated fabric floor **28** with the inflatable sides **14**, **16** pressing against the inflatable floor **12** made of high pressure drop stitch material.

[0033] As shown in FIG. **3**, the inflatable sides **14**, **16** are configured to be inclined outboard from the inflatable floor **12** to give the inflatable kayak **10** V-shaped sides flaring out from the inflatable floor **12**. According to this structure, since the inflatable sides **14**, **16** meet the inflatable floor **12** at an angle producing a chine, the speed and ease of paddling the inflatable kayak **10** is increased, particularly in difficult conditions.

[0034] The inflatable kayak **10** may have a length of between 9-21 feet, a beam may be between 22-32 inches, and a thickness of the drop stitch material used for the inflatable floor **12** and the inflatable sides **14**, **16** may be between 3-6 inches. The inflatable kayak **10** also advantageously may have an asymmetrical shape in a fore and aft direction, being slightly wider aft of an amidships portion and slightly narrower forward of the amidships portion.

[0035] However, the shape of the inflatable kayak **10** is not limited to an asymmetrical shape and the inflatable kayak **10** may also be symmetrical in the fore and aft direction.

[0036] The inflatable floor **12** and the inflatable sides **14**, **16** may each include an air valve **18**. The air valves **18** are preferably one-way air valves to prevent blow back during inflation, and to make it easier to close the air valves **18** with a valve cap. The air valves **18** may be locked in an open position for fast deflation prior to transportation and storage.

[0037] A skeg **20** is formed on the after portion of the bottom of the inflatable kayak **10**. The skeg **20** may be permanently attached or removable for storage or transportation.

[0038] At the bow portion of the inflatable kayak **10** is a rigid bow mold **22**. Since the drop stitch construction of the inflatable floor **12** and inflatable sides **14**, **16** of the inflatable kayak **10** preclude having a sharp bow that is effective to cut waves and increase maneuverability, the inflatable kayak **10** of the present invention includes a rigid bow mold **22** that is attached to the inflatable floor **12** and inflatable sides **14**, **16**, for example by gluing.

[0039] At the stern portion of the inflatable kayak **10** is a rigid stern mold **24**. Since the drop stitch construction of the inflatable floor **12** and inflatable sides **14**, **16** of the inflatable kayak **10** preclude having a sharp stern that is necessary for reverse paddling in kayaking, the inflatable kayak **10** of the present invention includes a rigid stern mold **24** that is attached to the inflatable floor **12** and inflatable sides **14**, **16**, for example by gluing.

[0040] The rigid bow mold **22** and rigid stern mold **24** of the inflatable kayak **10** may be made of rigid engineering or composite plastic construction or other plastic material, although other non-plastic materials may be used. The lateral sides of the needle nose **30** come together in a point at no more than a 60 degree angle. The rigid bow mold **22** and rigid stern mold **24** gives the inflatable kayak **10** a rigid bow and stern construction that enables a user to cut through waves and to paddle faster, further and easier as compared to conventional inflatable kayaks.

[0041] Although several embodiments of the invention have been shown and described, it would be appreciated by those skilled in the art that changes may be made in these embodiments without departing from the principles and spirit of the invention, the scope of which is defined in the claims and their equivalents.

What is claimed is:

1. An inflatable kayak comprising:

an inflatable floor made of high pressure drop stitch material; and

inflatable sides made of high-pressure drop stitch material formed at port and starboard sides of the inflatable floor, respectively,

wherein the inflatable sides are configured to be flare outboard from the inflatable floor.

2. The inflatable kayak of claim 1, wherein the inflatable sides are glued or welded directly to port and starboard sides of the inflatable floor.

3. The inflatable kayak of claim 1, further comprising a non-inflated fabric floor,

wherein the inflatable floor is positioned and attached to a top of the non-inflated fabric floor so that the inflatable sides press against the inflatable floor, and

the inflatable sides are glued or welded directly to port and starboard sides of the non-inflated fabric floor.

4. The inflatable kayak of claim 1, further comprising a rigid bow mold attached to the inflatable floor and inflatable sides.

5. The inflatable kayak of claim 3, further comprising a rigid bow mold attached to the non-inflated fabric floor and inflatable sides.

6. The inflatable kayak of claim 1, further comprising a rigid stern mold attached to the inflatable floor and inflatable sides.

7. The inflatable kayak of claim 1, further comprising a rigid stern mold attached to the non-inflated floor and inflatable sides.

8. The inflatable kayak of claim 1, wherein the high pressure drop stitch material of the inflatable floor and inflatable sides comprises a polyester fabric of approximately 1000 denier.

9. The inflatable kayak of claim 1, wherein the inflatable floor and inflatable sides are configured to be inflated to at least 15 psi.

10. The inflatable kayak of claim 1, wherein the inflatable kayak has a length of between 9-21 feet.

11. The inflatable kayak of claim 1, wherein the inflatable kayak has a beam of between 22-32 inches.

12. The inflatable kayak of claim 1, wherein a thickness of the drop stitch material used for the inflatable floor and the inflatable sides is between 3-8 inches.

13. The inflatable kayak of claim 1, wherein the inflatable has an asymmetrical shape in a fore and aft direction, the inflatable kayak being slightly wider aft of an amidships portion and slightly narrower forward of the amidships portion.

14. The inflatable kayak of claim 1, wherein the inflatable kayak has a symmetrical shape in a fore and aft direction.

15. The inflatable kayak of claim 1, further comprising one or more skegs formed on an after portion of a bottom of the inflatable floor.

16. The inflatable kayak of claim 4, wherein the rigid bow mold is made of rigid engineering plastic.

17. The inflatable kayak of claim 6, wherein the rigid stern mold is made of rigid engineering plastic.

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